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Happy Easter from SIFAT!

By Kathy Bryson
International Training Director

I have met many incredible people who have overcome adversity and are determined to make a difference in the lives of others. I want to share Anner Sagustame's story with you. Anner is from rural Honduras and has been doing an agricultural internship with us in Costa Rica, helping to set up demonstration models for family gardens and conserving soil and water. He will return soon to graduate at his agriculture college in Honduras. He wants to learn more at SIFAT about appropriate technologies in water purification, solar energy, simple water pumps for irrigation, preventing malnutrition in children and community development.

In a world full of poverty and hunger, God has given us an opportunity to make a difference by investing in training local leaders who can share proven solutions to help people out of poverty in their own communities and help them become self-sufficient with dignity.

It is a privilege to work with young people from Central America who have hope and believe God has called them to make a better future for their people. That hope coupled with practical skills to promote lasting solutions to poverty and hunger is the answer for many who are suffering because of lack of basic human needs of clean water, food, shelter, education, basic health and microenterprise opportunities.

Knowing Anner for 4 months, I have been amazed that he quotes a verse from the Bible for so many daily experiences. I thought maybe he learned at church or in a Bible study. It turns out that he just hungered to know more about God. But, he did not feel like he could relate to the established churches in his village. I pressed him for how he came to know the Bible so well, particularly quoting Jesus. Anner said, "The church people I saw were rich people, and I was not. But then I came to know Jesus in the Bible." He paused, his eyes welling up with tears, "**This Jesus I found in the Bible was somebody for me.** Somehow, I knew He loved me even though I was poor, and I knew he was a special friend to the poor.

I could relate to Him. I love to read his words and to talk about him!"

Anner's Story

My parents split up when I was two years old, and my mother gave me away. My widowed grandmother took me in and tried her best to raise me. We lived in a small rural village. She grew a little corn and beans on a tiny sliver of land and had a few chickens for eggs. I remember how hard she struggled to have enough to feed us both every day. I went to the local school for six years and finished at the top of my class. I always loved to study. To attend high school, I needed to ride a public bus to a town

30 minutes away. There was no way for me to continue school because we did not have the daily 50 cents bus fare. I did not even ask my grandmother, because I knew it would break her heart to tell me she could not pay.



Despite a childhood living in poverty with his grandmother, Anner found a way to continue his education, which included being part of the training and internships at SIFAT's Central American Training Center in Costa Rica.



Kathy Bryson with two of our agricultural interns at our Central American Training Center in Costa Rica.

With no chance to continue school, I started working as a hired hand planting corn for those who had land. By age 13, I realized we had to have a way to make more money. I wanted to help my grandmother, since she had helped me all my life. Plus, I had a dream. At night, I kept dreaming the same dream, that I slipped in the high school at night and slept there, so I could go to school during the day. But I had to have a uniform. So, I decided to ask a neighbor to rent me land to try to grow our own corn to sell for income. We made a deal that I would pay him when the harvest came. The first harvest, I did not do so well, but the second harvest was somewhat better. By the fifth harvest, I actually made a little profit, and we had more food to eat! I worked hard and raised 40 large sacks of shelled corn one year, which got \$8 per sack (\$320/year).

But, I had missed three years of school. Someone told me about an adult education school in a town where I could start working on my GED. Neighbors discouraged me, telling me there was no value in it, because it was only for those who could go to college. People like us would never have that chance, and I should not waste the time or money for the bus and the books. I really wanted to study and learn all I could.

So, I started the GED, very determined. The teacher came twice a month to give us the assignments and came back to test us the next month. I read everything and more, basically teaching myself. I made good grades because I studied every moment I was not working in the fields.

I heard that the national agriculture university (UNA) of Honduras was offering scholarships and that I should go to the town to take the entrance exam. My heart leapt! Could it be that something I had not even allowed myself to hope for would come true? That somebody like me could get a chance to go to college? I passed the exam and was given a scholarship to UNA. My life changed dramatically. Not a day passes that I do not thank God for the opportunity he has given me. It was like God gave me that dream of living at a high school—when I did not even imagine it was going to be at a dorm in a college! I know he allowed me this opportunity. I can share what I learn with other low-income families on how to improve our crops and how to manage our soils, so our land will sustain us. My dream is to return to my village and teach them what I have learned. And, I especially want to take care of my 84-year old grandmother who sacrificed everything she had to raise me.

I would really love to have the chance to take the Community Development and Appropriate Technologies training that SIFAT offers. This training, together with my agriculture background, will help me to improve life for my community. It makes me so happy to be able to go back and share all that I learn with others!

SIFAT Needs Your Support!

I am convinced with Anner's life experiences, his faith in Jesus and his special love for the poor that he will invest his life in helping others. You can see it in him when he shares with neighbors here in Costa Rica how to make compost and improve their gardens. I know he will share all that he would learn at SIFAT with others too!

We have church and community leaders from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti, El Salvador, Panama and more who long to study at SIFAT, but they can not get visas to the USA. They can come to Costa Rica to our new campus, but we must have help! For many in the Dry Corridor of Central America, it could mean the difference in life or death for their families. Will you help us give a scholarship to Anner and to others like him, so that they can learn practical skills to purify water, prevent child malnutrition and be able to make a living through the drought and floods they face annually? You can invest in a local leader with a heart to share solutions to their poverty not with handouts, **but with self-help!** Anner is eager to share the Love of God in practical ways! This year, we want to enable MANY to learn and then to return to their homes all over Central America doing this very thing!

Please help SIFAT and those wanting to take our training courses by designating your gift *International Training*. No amount is too small, but \$500 partial scholarships are needed. Will you personally or your Sunday School class, civic club or school sponsor a student? You can use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.sifat.org/donate.